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John Taylor
MR. TAYLOR'S ADDRESS

ON THE

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

AT BALLSTON SPA.





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AN
ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES,

IN THE VILLAGE OF BALLSTON SPA.



BY JOHN W. TAYLOR.



BALLSTON SPA:

PRINTED BY J. COMSTOCK.

1826.



Ballston Spa, July 4, 1826.

SIR,

In behalf of the citizens of the County of Saratoga assembled here this day, in commemoration of our National Jubilee, we present to you our acknowledgments for your patriotic address, and solicit of you the favor of a copy for publication.

We have the honor to be,

very respectfully yours, &c.

ANSON BROWN,
HUGH HAWKINS,
THOMAS PALMER,
SAMUEL SMITH,
SAMUEL FREEMAN,
L. B. LANGWORTHY,
JOEL LEE.

To the Hon. JOHN W. TAYLOR.



Ballston Spa, July 5, 1826.

GENTLEMEN,

A copy of the Address, which in compliance with your request, I had the honor to deliver yesterday, accompanies this note, and it is at your disposal. For its favorable reception, permit me through you, to tender to the audience my unfeigned thanks.

With great regard,

I am very truly

Your ob't serv't,

JOHN W. TAYLOR.

To Anson Brown, Hugh Hawkins,
Thomas Palmer, Samuel Smith,
Samuel Freeman, L. B. Langworthy, and Joel Lee, Esquires.

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ADDRESS.



FELLOW-CITIZENS,

UNITING with the assembled millions who this day are worshipping in the temple of Liberty:—bending before HIM who although invisible is seen in his glorious works,—who although unsearchable is felt in his manifold mercies:—standing on an elevation, from which the labors of half a century of national existence can be reviewed: we are invited to raise our conceptions to the dignity of the occasion which has called us together.

The event we commemorate, has strongly marked the condition of our country. In her colonial state, America was restricted in her commerce, and crippled in her manufactures. Her increasing power and resources, were viewed with jealousy by the British Government. The claim of Parliament, to legislate for us in all cases whatever, was exemplified in the establishment of a revenue system without our consent.

The alarm which followed this measure, was produced, not by the amount of tax imposed, but by the principle it involved. A Congress of delegates, was held in Philadelphia, in September, 1774, to consider the actual condition of the colonies, and the various subjects of difference between them and the mother country. These differences were increased, by the outrage of the British troops at Lexington in April 1775, and the proclamation of rebellion, issued by the Court of St. James, the August following. After these acts of tyranny, all well informed men in America, considered independence or slavery the only alternatives. Shortly after the proclamation was received in this country, Congress resolved to fit out a naval armament, and made the most vigorous efforts to prepare for the declaration of Independence. It was adopted in the form you have heard read, the succeeding 4th of July. It was no hasty nor inconsiderate step. The great men who announced it, well appreciated its incalculable importance. Their own destiny and that of their posterity were staked on the issue. To human appearance, the approaching contest was not only perilous, but awfully desperate. On one side stood an infant people, unskilled in war,—unprovided with arms, ordnance, or military stores,—unaccustomed to the privations of a camp,—destitute of revenues to clothe, subsist or pay the re-

cruits,—and even without a government to enforce obedience to its decrees. On the other side stood a nation, confident in her strength,—exulting in her victories, and energetic in her government, whose military prowess and the glory of whose arms were co-extensive with the earth.

The peril of the enterprise, was greatly enhanced by the consideration, that many of our own people were opposed to the revolution. Some from affection to the mother country ;—some from regard to office and political power ; and others from the apparent hopelessness of our cause, sought safety in the impending storm, under the protection of Great Britain. No man of this generation, can fully estimate the firmness of purpose, the exalted heroism, which animated the souls of our revolutionary patriots. The scale of their admeasurement can be formed, only in the midst of dangers such as they encountered. They doubtless relied, much as man ought to rely, on stout hearts and strong arms. But their chief confidence was not in these. It was, in the righteousness of their cause, and in the God of battles. To these they appealed ; in these they trusted.—Spreading their wrongs before the world, and invoking the support of heaven, they buckled on their armour, determined like men to conquer

or like men to die. Previous to the proclamation of independence, in two successive years, by order of Congress, a day of solemn fasting, humiliation and prayer was generally observed throughout the colonies. Strengthened by the consolations of religion, the public mind acquired a moral force which enabled it to brave the worst, while its hopes were the highest. Entering on the conflict, the soldier's watch word was God and our Country. He fought not for independence alone, but for religion and law. Having laid his account with danger, it did not appal him.—Having hardened his body by fatigue, it did not subdue him. With nerves undisturbed, and with a heart undaunted, he endured hunger, cold and imprisonment. Even death itself, was not considered by him the greatest of evils. When duty demanded, he met it with a warrior's arm and a martyr's spirit. In the field of battle there is something so animating ; something that so sustains to the last, the brave man struggling in his country's cause, that if he fall, he feels his fall is glorious. For him I ask not your commiseration. But there were those, for whose fate commiseration is due.—For whose sufferings, the tear of sympathy may well moisten the manly cheek. Overpowered by numbers ;—covered with wounds ;—fainting from loss of blood ;—they fell into the hands of the enemy. Immured in loathsome prisons ;—chained to the

dying and the dead ;—spurned as traitors ;—denied as rebels, those rights, which civilized nations hold sacred towards prisoners of war ;—when naked and hungry, insulted by offers of pardon and plenty, on condition they would accept his Majesty's bounty and put on his uniform :—days, and months, and years, passing over their heads, and witnessing no other change than the deeper gloom of their prison ;—than their numbers diminished by the hand of death ;—than the more frightful emaciation of their own wasted bodies ;—their prospect of exchange, again and again disappointed ;—and their patriotic hopes impaired, by fabricated news of the disaster of their country's arms ;—these complicated sufferings, were too severe for men to bear : and yet they were borne by soldiers of the American army,—by patriots whose love of country was so pure, so intense, so disinterested, that the honors and gold of the British Empire could not corrupt them, could not induce them to violate their faith or sully their honor.

In estimating the price of our Independence, we must consider not only the soldier's sufferings in the field, and in captivity, but also the keen anguish of a mother's heart—the despairing, unutterable woe which overwhelmed her soul, in the consciousness that such was the condition of her

son—perhaps her only son. And yet American matrons, fully aware of these enumerated horrors; in a spirit of devotion to their country surpassing example, incited their sons to the field, and encouraged them to the conflict. Selling their ornaments to equip them for the battle, and putting arms in their hands, Go, said they, and use them for your country : Go, with a mother's blessing, use them like men, and God will give you the victory.

Time would fail me to speak of the war in its progress ; the hardships endured on our northern frontier :—the conflagrations and massacres perpetrated by the savage foe :—the expedition against Quebec under the gallant Montgomery :—the universal mourning for his untimely fall :—the burst of triumph which rang through America, at the capture of Burgoyne, on the plains of our own Saratoga :—the sufferings of our army, in its perilous retreat through the Jerseys :—the surrender of Cornwallis :—the recognition of our Independence by the King of Great Britain :—and the grand exhibition of public virtue, at the close of the war, in the return by Gen. Washington of his commission to Congress. Faithful historians have recorded in living lines these interesting events. On this occasion, we can only glance at the prom-

inent figures in the picture, as we pass to take a brief view of our country's advancement, after the acknowledgment of its independence.

The want of a national government had been severely felt, during the whole course of the war. Its necessity in peace, was not less apparent. Our commerce, which the war had destroyed, did not revive. No uniform system of revenue existed in the states, and Congress had power to establish none. If one state laid a duty on the importation of foreign merchandize, another, to encourage her own trade, admitted it free. The tax on foreign tonnage, varied in different parts of the confederation 200 per cent. States, which in common danger, had sacrificed all selfish considerations, and stood firm in each others defence, were found in peace, indulging jealousies and rivalries of the most injurious nature. Foreign agents interfered in our domestic concerns. No adequate provision was made, to pay the public debt or sustain the public credit. The fruits of the revolution were in danger of being lost in the absence of a general government to preserve them. In this condition of our affairs, a convention of delegates from the several states, assembled in Philadelphia, under the resolution of Congress of Feb. 1787, and in the autumn of that year, reported,

under the warm recommendation of Gen. Washington, the constitution of the United States. It was adopted by the people of the several states, "in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty." Under its administration, this country has advanced in population, wealth, and general prosperity, beyond all example.

In 1775, our population was estimated by Congress at 2,389,300. In 1820, it was ascertained by the census to be 9,687,999. And at this time it is not less than 12,000,000 souls. In the European governments most favorable to human existence, the population has not doubled in less than one hundred years. In the United States, it doubles in one fourth of that time.

Fifty years ago, our settlements were confined to a narrow strip of country, along the Atlantic frontier. They now are extended so far to the west, that organized governments are established beyond the Mississippi. Since the adoption of the constitution, the number of states composing the union has nearly doubled, and our political power has increased more than fourfold.

The wealth and resources of our country have kept pace with its advancing population. In 35 years, our exports have risen in value from 20 to 99 millions of dollars. Our revenues derived from commerce, which in 1791, were less than seven millions of dollars, for several years past have exceeded the average sum of twenty millions of dollars.

In 1791, the ascertained public debt of the revolutionary war, was 75 millions of dollars. This debt has been paid, principal and interest, with the exception of 13 millions, which bears an interest of only three per cent per annum.

In 1812, after years of patient remonstrance on our part, and continued aggression on the part of Great Britain, we were again obliged to take up arms, in defence of our rights. Our seamen had been impressed, and our flag insulted ; our ships had been captured and condemned, for the violation of pretended blockades : and the common highway of nations, was closed against our lawful commerce. War, or disgrace, became inevitable. We chose the former, and came out of the conflict, with our honor untarnished, and our national character elevated. Whatever opinions were for a time en-

tertaincd, by a part of our citizens in regard to the war ; now that the passions of the day have subsided, the deliberate judgment of the whole nation pronounces it to have been just. Even in those states, where resistance to its prosecution was the most formidable, the course they then pursued has been condemned, and their political opinions retracted. At the close of the war, our national debt exceeded 120 millions of dollars.— It has been reduced to less than 80 millions, and if peace shall continue, it will be wholly extinguished in less than nine years.

The general prosperity of our country has been promoted, by improvements in agriculture ; by the successful prosecution of manufacturing industry ; and by increased attention to the cause of literature and science. Colleges, academies and common schools have been established, and liberally endowed ; and the means of education have been rendered cheap and easy of access. The spirit of the times is advantageously displayed, in the increasing regard paid to the culture of the female mind. Seminaries for their instruction in the higher branches of education, are numerous, and well supported. Their influence on the condition of civilized society is too beneficent, to escape the notice of patriots and statesmen ; too important to

be omitted, in this general view of our country's prosperity.

In proceeding to enumerate, on this our Jubilee, some causes of national gratitude and joy, we place in the first rank, the momentous truth, that a nation of great and rapidly increasing strength exists upon earth, for an example to mankind, where in fact as well as in name Sovereignty resides in the People. The government, in all its departments is theirs. Its officers are their agents; employed to transact their business, deriving from them all their authority, and amenable to them for its faithful exercise. Here no political power, under whatever pretext, can be exerted, which the People have not granted. This sublime principle, is the corner stone of our temple of liberty. It not only exalts, and dignifies the character, of every American citizen, but it also imposes upon him duties, of the highest order. It binds him in the strongest obligations to watch the conduct of those, to whom the administration of government is confided. Hence arises the vast importance of intelligence, and unceasing vigilance, in the body of the community. Ignorance, and indifference, are altogether incompatible with the preservation of liberty. The principles of legitimacy, on the other hand, are

diametrically opposed to our free institutions.— According to them, “ the Monarch is the State.” He is every thing, and the People nothing. Whatever of liberty the subject enjoys, is granted by him, and depends on his pleasure for its continuance. Thus widely different is the condition of a citizen in the United States, from that of a subject in the despotic governments of the eastern hemisphere.

A second cause of gratitude and joy, is the success of our confederated representative government. The adaptation of the republican system, under any modification, to so extended a country ; embracing so various, and apparently conflicting interests, was a problem of doubtful solution. It no longer remains so. In foreign war ; in the collisions of party ; in times of faction and violence, no less than in periods of peace and tranquility, it has proved itself adequate to every emergency. By delegating to one class of representatives the management of the foreign relations of the country, and other matters purely national ; and to another, the internal and domestic affairs of each state, respectability abroad, and liberty at home, are happily associated. This division of power in the frame of our government, like the

division of labor in manufacturing establishments, is the secret of success and perfection.

'This nation is not only more free, but it is actually stronger than it could be, under one consolidated government. The addition of new states, by extending its basis ; by enlarging the surface on which the efforts of faction are obliged to act ; and by multiplying enlightened agents, not likely to be affected by the same exciting causes ; greatly contributes to the stability of our system. None can fix limits to its extension.— This unmeasured continent in all its breadth, with its multiplied millions of freemen, all speaking the same language, may repose in safety under one general government, equally attentive to the protection, and defence, of the numerous states which shall compose our union. How exhilarating to a Patriot's heart, is this vision of futurity. God has stamped greatness, on the face of our Country. He cast it in a mould of signal magnificence. In population, government, literature, arts, and useful inventions, it is destined to occupy a front, if not the first rank upon earth.

A third cause of gratitude and joy, is our successful experiment of religious liberty. The Uni-

ted States exhibit to the world the singular and cheering spectacle, of a nation, with an exalted standard of public morals, yet without an established religion ; of a ministry, faithful to its high duties, yet dependant for support, on the voluntary contributions of their congregations ; of a people, professing religious creeds of almost endless variety, yet living together in peace and charity. In all other governments, civil and ecclesiastical affairs, are more or less united. In the formation of ours, many good men, apprehended the destruction of religion, in the absence of a legal support. Experience has dissipated their fears. It has proved, that religion flourishes best when least controled by civil power, and that errors of opinion in it, as well as in politics, " may be tolerated with safety where reason is left free to combat them."

A fourth cause of gratitude and joy, is the benign influence of our example, on the free governments of South America. Age after age had witnessed the degradation, and oppression of the Spanish Colonies. Cut off by their parent state, from intercourse, both commercial and political, with all other nations ; groaning under a despotism, as unchanging as it was remorseless ; they were denied, even the miserable boon, of making

known their sufferings, to their fellow men. But the day of retribution came, and the yoke of the oppressor was broken. New nations sprang into existence, with numbers and resources, exceeding those of this country at the period of our revolution. Looking abroad for models of government, they embraced with enthusiasm our own principles of civil liberty. Animated by the example of our signal prosperity, they reasonably may anticipate results, equally propitious. From the commencement of their struggle for liberty, the People and Government of the United States, felt for them the warmest sympathy. We anxiously watched their revolution in its progress, rejoiced in the triumph of their arms, and seized the earliest moment compatible with our neutral duties, to recognize their independence—to welcome them into the family of nations—and to establish with them relations of amity and commerce. The tree of liberty, has taken deep root in this western hemisphere. May its branches spread to the ends of the earth, and all nations find healing in its leaves. Greece! heroic, classical, christian Greece! May she too soon repose beneath its shade, and be enriched with the abundance of its fruits. Whatever be her fate, she deserves independence. The splendor of her early renown is obscured, in the brighter lustre of her recent achievements. Her noble daring; her invincible

valor : the blaze of her victories and defeats ; must awe the powers of Europe, if it does not arouse them, to break the scimitar of the exterminating Turk.

I should illy requite the breathless attention of this crowded audience, were I to weary it with details of those facts which compose our history. But before I close, permit me to add, that as citizens of New-York we have especial cause of gratitude and joy. At the adoption of the federal constitution, this state was inferior in political power to three members of the confederacy. It was equal only to the fourth. Her population and wealth, have long since placed her at the head of the Union. The successful application of steam to the purposes of navigation, and the construction of the Erie and Champlain canals, which have illustrated her annals, are events, too immensely important to our nation, and to the world, to pass this day, without honorable mention.— These monuments, the glory of our state and of the age ; conquering time and annihilating space, will remain, while the elements endure, diffusing unnumbered blessings to the human race. The men whose genius planned ; whose intelligence directed ; whose perseverance accomplished them ; have earned a most enviable fame. Their names

will be transmitted to posterity, high on the roll of public benefactors.

What though our politics have been termed ferocious, and the fluctuations of our parties derided ! What though slanders, propagated by some in error, by others in design, occasionally assail our public men and may for a time diminish confidence in their talents or integrity ! These partial evils, perhaps necessarily incident to our free institutions, are but the spots on our sun's disc, which unseen, or disregarded, by the myriads who rejoice in its light, and are warmed by its beams ; substraet little or nothing from its matchless effulgence. But the public works of our state, " her magnificent metropolis," and flourishing villages, " her ever multiplying institutions for charity, for science, for the arts, for social improvement." " These," in the language of a living statesman, " have gone on, are going on, and I trust will go on, under all the fluctuations of her parties, whilst I could name to you States, which have always marched to the Polls in a Macedonian Phalanx that have fallen far behind New-York, in these great objects of social organization."

WARRIORS OF THE REVOLUTION. "You are in the midst of posterity." You stand in our ranks, the honored survivors of a noble band. Thousands of your companions have gone before you to receive the patriot's reward. We recognize in you the Representatives of departed and of living heroes. The shades of Montgomery and Mercer rise to our view. Your memories supply the place of many a long lost comrade. Suppress those tears. Your silvered locks are crowned with a nation's blessing. You, we congratulate, on the manifold causes of gratitude and joy which have passed before us. To have contributed in your measure, to their accomplishment, is distinction enough to satisfy the highest aspirations of a patriot's bosom. We rejoice that your lives, and the life of him, who in glowing language stated our wrongs, and framed that declaration of independence so manfully sustained by your youthful valor, have been prolonged to see the glory of our country, and to honor its Jubilee. Sanguine as were the hopes, which in early life marshaled your array, and placed you in the front of the battle, no imagination could then conceive ; no fancy dared then portray ; the national prosperity your eyes have

witnessed. Gathered as you must be, one by one, to the great congregation of your companions in arms, you will descend to the tomb sustained and encouraged by these consolations ; that though man dies his country lives ; that your bodies, resting from their labors, will repose in a land of freedom ; and that your sufferings and achievements, will be held in remembrance by a grateful people, until earthly distinctions shall be lost and forgotten, in the brighter glory of celestial existence.

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